

ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION: Male Choristers' Perceptions of and Preferences for Choral Formations Based on Individual Singer Placement Within the Ensemble

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In recent years, research has shed light on the nature of singer perception in the choral setting; however, only a few studies have explored the nature of singer placement and its impact on members of the ensemble, and little research has been conducted on gender-specific ensembles. Fifty participants from two male choral ensembles took part in an experiment to assess the choristers' perceptions of and preferences for four choral formations based on individual singer placement within sections and placement of sections within the ensemble. Participants' perceptions and preferences were assessed in response to four overall choral formations based on criteria derived from factors relating to the Self-to-Other Ratio (SOR) – a singer's perception of his sound within his section and the chorus. The study also sought to determine whether Voice Part and Musical Experience Level are significant factors in participants' perceptions of and preferences for four different formations featuring a combination of placements within section (Acoustic and Experience placements) and sectional formations (Block and Column Sectional formations). Participants rated their perceptual experience of the four immediately after having sung in each and then indicated preference for specific

placements based on their perceptual experience. Participants' responses were analyzed for significance through ANOVA and chi-square testing of all pertinent variables. In terms of Voice Part, tenor singers indicated preference for Block Sectional formation, while bass singers indicated preference for Column Sectional formation. It was also determined that singers' musical experience was significant in determining their preferences for formations, with singers of higher musical experience preferring Block Sectional formation and singers of lower musical experience preferring Column Sectional formation. Singers' preference for placement within sections was not found to be significant, possibly indicating that this type of placement does not impact singer perception in the choral setting as much as has been thought by many choral conductors and pedagogues. Continued research exploring the nature of individual singer perception in the choral setting will provide a better understanding of the nature of singers' individual vocal production when combined in ensemble, thus enabling conductors to foster more fulfilling musical experiences in their choirs.